MY LADY OF THE NORTH

The Love Story of A Gray Jacket

by RANDALL PARRISH

Author of "WHEN WILDERNESS WAS KING"

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ARTHUR T. WILLIAMSON

SYNOPSIS.

The story opens in a Confederate tent at a critical stage of the Civil War. Gen. Lee imparts to Capt. Wayne an important message to Longstreet. Accompanied by Sergt. Craig, an old army scout, Wayne starts on his mission. They get within the lines of the enemy and in the darkness Wayne is taken for a Federal officer and a young lady on horseback is given in his charge. She is a northern girl and attempts to escape. One of the horses succumbs and Craig goes through with the dispatches, while Wayne and My Lady of the North are left alone. They seek shelter in a hut and entering it in the dark a huge mastiff attacks Wayne. The girl shoots the brute just in time. The owner of the hut, Jed Bungay, and his wife appear and soon a party of horsemen approach. They are led by a man claiming to be Ned Lowrie, but who proves to be Maj. Brennan, a Federal officer whom the Union girl recognizes. He orders the arrest of Wayne as a spy and he is brought before Sheridan, who threatens him with death unless he reveals the secret message. Wayne believes Edith Brennan to be the wife of Maj. Brennan. He is rescued by Jed Bungay, who starts to reach Gen. Lee, while Wayne in disguise penetrates to the ballroom, beneath which he had been imprisoned. He is introduced to a Miss Minor and barely escapes being unmasked. Edith Brennan, recognizing Wayne, says she will save him. Securing a pass through the lines, they are confronted by Brennan, who is knocked senseless. Then, bidding Edith adieu, Wayne makes a dash for liberty. He encounters Bungay; they reach the Lee camp and are sent with reinforcements to Jubal Early.

CHAPTER XXI.—Continued.

With the ardor of young manhood I looked forward to the coming battle, when I knew the mighty armies of North and South would once again contest for the fertile Shenandoah. It was to be American pitted against American, a struggle ever worthy of the gods. Slowly I rode back down the files of my men, marking their alignment and accoutrements with practised eye, smiling grimly as I noted their eager faces, war-worn and bronzed by exposure, yet reanimated by hope of active service. As I watched them thus, I thought again of those many other faces who once rode as these men did now, but who had died for duty even as these also might yet be called upon to die. One hundred and three strong, gay in bright new uniforms, with unstained banner kissing the breeze above our proud young heads, we rode hopefully forth from Charlottesville scarce three years before, untried, undisciplined, unknown, to place our lives willingly upon the scared altar of our native State. What speechless years of horror those had been; what history we had written with our naked steel; what scenes of suffering and death lay along that bloody path we travelled! To-day, down the same red road our eyes still set grimly to the northward, our flag a torn and ragged remnant, barely forty men wore the "D" between the crossed sabres on their slouched brown hats, in spite of all recruiting. The cheer in my heart was for the living; the tear in my eye was for the dead.

"Colgate," I said gravely, as I ranged up beside him at the rear of the troop, "the men look exceedingly well, and do not appear to have suffered greatly because of short rations."

"Oh, the lads are always in fine fettle when they expect a fight," he answered, his own eyes dancing as he swept them over that straight line of backs in his front. "They'll scrap the better for being a bit hungry,—it makes them savage. Beats all, Captain, what foolish notions some of those people on the other side have of us Southerners. They seem to think we are entirely different from themselves; yet I reckon it would puzzle any recruiting officer up yonder to show a finer lot of fighting men than those fellows ahead there."

I rode slowly forward to my own position at the head of the troop. As I swung my horse into our accustomed position I was too deeply buried in reflection to be clearly conscious of much that was occurring about me. Suddenly, however, I became aware that some one, nearly obscured by the enveloping cloud of dust, was riding without the column, in an independence of military discipline not to be permitted. In the state of mind I was then in this discovery strangely irritated me.

"Sergeant," I questioned sharply, of the raw-boned trooper at the end of the first platoon, "what fellow is that riding out yonder?"

"It's ther pesky little cuss as come in with ye yesterday, sir," he returned with a grin. "He's confiscated a mule somewhar an' says he's a goin' back hum 'long o' we uns."

Curious to learn how Jed had emerged from his arduous adventures, I spurred my horse alongside of him. The little man, bending forward dubiously, as if fearful of accident, was riding bareback on a gaunt, long-legged mule, which, judging from all outward appearances, must have been some discarded asset of the quartermaster's department.

"Going home, Jed?" I asked, as he glanced up and saw me.

"Just as durn quick as I kin git thar," he returned emphatically. "By gum, Cap, I ain't bin 'way from Marian long as this afore in twelve year. Reckon she thinks I've skedaddled fer good this time, an' 'll be a takin' up with some other male critter lest I git back thar mighty sudden. Women's odd, Cap, durn nigh as crazy 'bout some things as a mule."

He eyed his mount critically.

"Durned if ever I thought I'd git astraddle o' any four-legged critter agin," he said, rubbing himself as if in sudden and painful recollection of the past. "But I sorter picked up this yere mule down et ther corral, an' he's tew durn wore out a totin' things fer you uns ter ever move offen a walk. I sorter reckon it's a heap easier a sittin' yere than ter take it afut all ther way ter ther mountings."

It was long after dark the second day when, thoroughly wearied, we turned into an old tobacco field and made camp for the night. To right and left of our position glowed the cheery fires, telling where Early's command bivouacked in line of battle. From the low range of hills in front of where we rested one could look across an intervening valley, and see far off to the northward the dim flames which marked the position of the enemy. Down in the mysterious darkness between, divided only by a swift and narrow stream, were the blue and gray pickets. The opposing forces were sleeping on their arms, making ready for the death grip on the morrow.

As I lay there thinking, wondering what might be my fate before another nightfall, seeing constantly in my half-dreams the fair face of a woman, which made me more of a coward than I had ever felt myself before, I was partially aroused by the droning tones of a voice close at hand. Lifting myself on one elbow I glanced curiously around to see where it originated, what was occurring. Clustered about a roaring fire of rails were a dozen troopers, and in the midst of them, occupying the post of honor upon an empty powder keg, was Bungay, enthusiastically reciting Scott. I caught a line or two:

"'At once there rose so wild a yell
Within that dark and narrow dell,
As all the fiends from heaven that fell
Had pealed the battle-cry of hell.'"

and then the drowsy god pressed down my heavy eyelids, and I fell asleep.

CHAPTER XXII.

The Battle in the Shenandoah.

To me it has always seemed remarkable that after all my other battle experiences—Antietam, Gettysburg, the Wilderness, ay! even including that first fierce baptism of fire at Manassas—no action in which I ever participated should remain so clearly photographed upon memory as this last desperate struggle for supremacy in the Shenandoah. Every minute detail of the conflict, at least so far as I chanced to be a personal participant, rises before me as I write, and I doubt not I could trace to-day each step taken upon that stricken field.

The reveille had not sounded when I first awoke and, rolling from my blanket, looked about me. Already a faint, dim line of gray, heralding the dawn, was growing clearly defined in the east, and making manifest those heavy fog-banks which, hanging dank and low, obscured the valley. The tired men of my troop were yet lying upon the ground, wrapped tightly in their blankets, oblivious of the deadly work before them; but I could hear the horses already moving uneasily at their picket-ropes, and observed here and there the chilled figure of a sentry leaning upon his gun, oddly distorted in form by the enveloping mist.

Directly in advance of where we rested, a long hill sloped gently upward for perhaps a hundred yards, its crest topped with a thick growth of young oak trees, yet seemingly devoid of underbrush. No troops were camped in our immediate front, and feeling curious to ascertain something of our formation, as well as to examine the lay of the land between us and the position occupied by the enemy, I walked slowly forward, unhindered, until I attained the crest. The fog yet held the secrets of the valley safely locked within its brown hand, and I could penetrate none of its mysteries. It was like gazing down from some headland into a silent, unvexed sea. But directly across from where I stood, apparently along the summit of another chain of low hills similar to those we occupied, I could perceive the flames of numerous camp-fires leaping up, into sudden radiance, while against the brightening sky a great flag lazily flapped its folds to the freshening breeze. Evidently our opponents were first astir, and the headquarters of some division of the enemy must be across yonder. As I gazed, other fires burst forth to left and right, as far as the unaided eye could carry through the gloom, and I was thus enabled to trace distinctly those advanced lines opposing us. Experience told me their position must be a strong one, and their force heavy.

As I turned to mark our own formation, the roll of drums rang out, while the quickening notes of the reveille sounded down the long lines of slumbering men. Life returned, as if by magic, to those motionless forms, and almost in a moment all below me became astir, and I could clearly distinguish the various branches of the service, as they stretched away commingled upon either hand. We were evidently stationed close to the centre of our own position. The intervening ground sloped so gently forward, while the hill crest was so thickly crowned with trees, it looked an ideal position from which to advance in line of attack. Upon my right there appeared a break in the solidity of our line, but even as I noted it, wondering at the oversight, the dense front of an infantry column debouched from a ravine and, marching steadily forward, filled the gap. I could distinctly mark the wearied manner in which the men composing it flung themselves prostrate on the hard ground the moment they were halted—doubtless all through the long hours of the black night they had been toiling on to be in time.

Aides were galloping furiously now among the scattered commands. The obscuring fog slowly rose from off the face of the valley, but all the central portion remained veiled from view. Suddenly, as I watched, the brown cloud beneath me was rent asunder here and there by little spits of fire, and it was curious to observe how those quick spiteful darts of flame swept the full length of my vista. I could distinguish no reports,—it was too far away,—but realized that the opposing pickets had caught sight of each other through the gloom. Then a big gun boomed almost directly opposite me, its flame seeming like a red-hot knife rending the mist. This had barely vanished when a sudden cheer rang out upon my left, and I turned in time to behold a thin, scattered line of gray-clad infantrymen swarm down the steep slope into the valley. With hats drawn low, and guns advanced, they plunged at a run into the mist and disappeared. Our skirmishers had gone in; the ball had opened.

I had tarried long enough; any moment now might bring "boots and saddles," and if I possessed the slightest desire for a breakfast to fight on, it behooved me to get back within our lines. The memory of that animated scene in front still fresh upon me, how quiet and commonplace everything appeared down there in the hills.

"What has become of Bungay?" I questioned of Colgate, who was lying upon his back with eyes fastened on a floating cloud.

"Do you mean the little mountaineer who came in with us last night?" I nodded.

"Oh, his mule bolted at the first shot over yonder, and the little fellow is after it. He's down the field there somewhere."

How time dragged! The battery to left of us went into action, and began firing rapidly; we could mark the black figures of the cannoneers at the nearer guns, outlined against the sky over the crest, as they moved quickly back and forth. Twice they bore motionless bodies to the rear, and laid them down tenderly beyond the fierce zone of fire. Then the heavier pieces of artillery farther down the line burst into thunder, and we silently watched a large force of infantry move slowly past us up the long slope until they halted in line of battle just behind its summit, the advanced files lying flat upon their faces and peering over. But no orders came for us.

Nearly noon by the red sun hiding behind the drifting powder cloud. The ever-deepening roar of ceaseless contest had moved westward down the valley, when an aide wheeled his smoking horse in front of the Colonel, spoke a dozen hasty words, pointed impetuously to the left, and dashed off down the line. The men leaped to their feet in eager expectancy, and as the "Fall in, fall in there, lads," echoed joyously from lip to lip, the kindling eyes and rapid movements voiced unmistakably the soldier spirit. We moved westward down the long, bare slope in the sunshine, through a half-dozen deserted, desolate fields, and along a narrow, rocky defile leading into a deep ravine. At the mouth of the ravine we came forth into the broad valley, and halted. Just in front of us, scarcely a half-mile distant, were the fighting lines, partially enveloped in dense smoke, out from which broke patches of blue or gray, as charge succeeded charge, or the wind swept aside the fog of battle. The firing was one continuous crash, while plunging bullets, overreaching their mark, began to chug into our own ranks, dealing death impartially to horse and man. The captain of the troop next mine wheeled suddenly, a look of surprise upon his face, and fell backward into the arms of one of his men; with an intense scream of agony, almost human, the horse of my first sergeant reared and came over, crushing the rider before he could loosen foot from stirrup; the Lieutenant-Colonel rode slowly past us to the rear, his face deathly white, one arm dripping blood, dangling helpless at his side. This was the hardest work of war, that silent agony which tried men in helpless bondage to unyielding discipline. I glanced anxiously along the front of my troop, but they required no word from me; with tightly set lips, and pale, stern faces, they held their line steady as granite, closing up silently the ragged gaps torn by plunging balls.

"Captain," said Colgate, riding to where I sat my horse, "you will see that the paper I gave you reaches home safe if I fail to come out of this?"

I reached over and gripped his hand hard.

"It will be the first thing I shall remember, Jack," I answered earnestly. "But we may have it easy enough after all—it seems to be an infantry affair."

He shook his head gravely.

"No," he said, pointing forward, "they will need us now."

As he spoke it seemed as though the sharp firing upon both sides suddenly ceased by mutual consent. The terrible roar of small arms, which had mingled with the continuous thunder of great guns, died away into an intermittent rattling of musketry, and as the heavy smoke slowly drifted upward in a great white cloud, we could plainly distinguish the advancing Federal lines, three ranks deep, stretching to left and right in one vast, impenetrable blue wall, sweeping toward us upon a run. Where but a brief moment before the plain appeared deserted, it was now fairly alive with soldiery, the sun gleaming on fixed bayonets, and faces aglow with the ardor of surprise. Some one had blundered! The thin, unsupported line of gray infantry directly in our front closed up their shattered ranks hastily in desperate effort to stay the rush. We could see them jamming their muskets for volley fire, and then, with clash and clatter that drowned all other sounds, a battery of six black guns came flying madly past us, every horse on the run, lashed into frenzy by his wild rider. With carriage and caisson leaping at every jump, the half-naked, smoke-begrimed cannoneers clinging to their seats like monkeys, they dashed recklessly forward, swung about into position, and almost before the muzzles had been well pointed, were hurling canister into that blue, victorious advance. How those gallant fellows worked! their guns leaping into air at each discharge, their movements clockwork! Tense, eager, expectant, every hand among us hard gripped on sabre hilt, we waited that word which surely could not be delayed, while from end to end, down the full length of our straining line, rang out the yell of exultant pride.

"Steady, men; steady there, lads!" called the old Colonel, sternly, his own eyes filled with tears. "Our turn will come."

Torn, rent, shattered, bleeding, treading upon the dead and mangled in rows, those iron men in blue came on. They were as demons laughing at death. No rain of lead, no hail of canister, no certainty of destruction could check now the fierce impetus of that forward rush. God knows it was magnificent; the supreme effort of men intoxicated with the enthusiasm of war! Even where we were we could see and feel the giant power in those grim ranks of steel—the tattered flags, the stern, set faces, the deep-toned chorus of "Glory, glory, hallelujah," that echoed to their tread. Those men meant to win or die, and they rolled on as Cromwell's Ironsides at Marston Moor. Twice they staggered, when the mad volleys ploughed ragged red lanes through them, but only to rally and press sternly on. They struck that crouching gray line of infantry, fairly buried it with their dense blue folds, and, with one fierce burrah of triumph, closed down upon the guns. Even as they blotted them from sight, an aide, hatless and bleeding, his horse wounded and staggering from weakness, tore down toward us along the crest. A hundred feet away his mount fell headlong, but on foot and dying he reached our front.

"Colonel Carter," he panted, pressing one hand upon his breast to keep back the welling blood, "charge, and hold that battery until we can bring infantry to your support."

No man among us doubted the full meaning of it—we were to save the army! The very horses seemed to feel a sense of relief, hands clinched more tightly on taut reins to hold them in check; under the old battered hats the eyes of the troopers gleamed hungrily.

"Virginians!" and the old Colonel's voice rang like a clarion down the breathless line, "there is where you die! Follow me!"

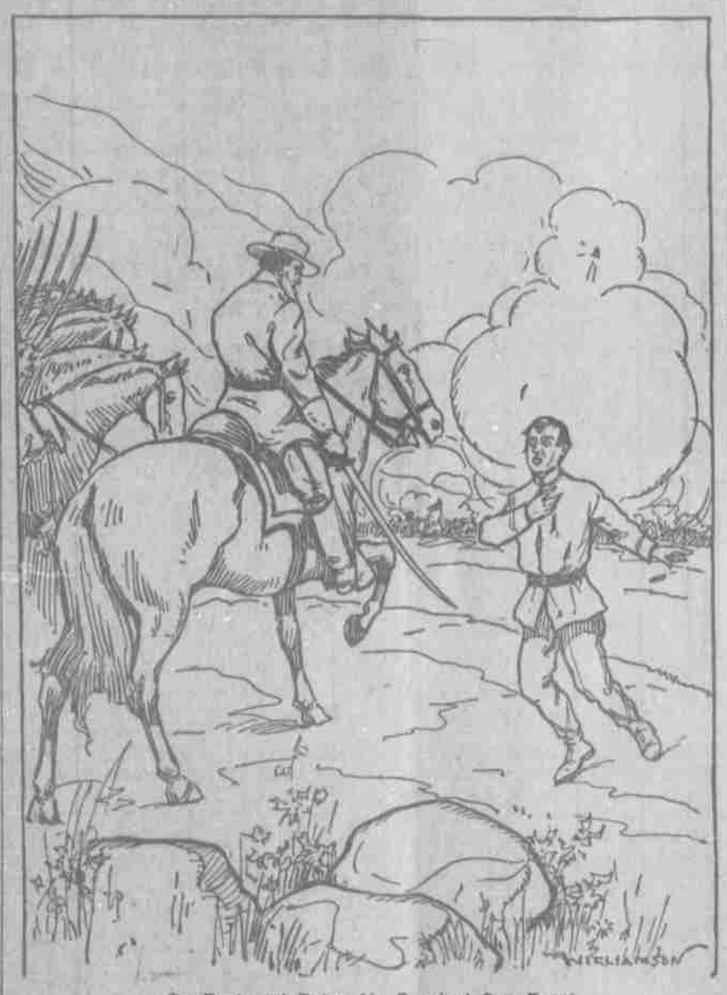
Slowly, like some mighty mountain torrent gaining force, we rode forth at a walk, each trooper lined to precision of review, yet instinctively taking distance for sword play. Halfway down the slight slope our line broke into a soaring trot, then, as the thrilling notes of the charge sounded above us, we swept forward in wild, impetuous tumult.

Who can tell the story of those seconds that so swiftly followed? Surely not one who saw but the vivid flash of steel, the agonized faces, the flame of belching fire. I recall the frenzied leap of my horse as we struck the line ere it could form into square; the blows dealt savagely to right and left; the blaze of a volley scorching our faces; the look of the big infantryman I rode down; the sudden thrust that saved me from a levelled gun; the quick swerving of our horses as they came in contact with the cannon; the shouts of rage; the blows; the screams of pain; the white face of Colgate as he reeled and fell. These are all in my memory, blurred, commingled, indistinct, yet distressful as any nightmare. In some way, how I know not, I realized that we had hurled them back, shattered them by our first fierce blow; that the guns were once again ours; that fifty dismounted troopers were tugging desperately at their wheels. Then that dense blue mass surged forward once again, engulfed us in its deadly folds, and with steel and bullet, sword and clubbed musket, ploughed through our broken ranks, rending us in twain, fairly smothering us by sheer force of numbers. I saw the old Colonel plunge head-down into a ruck beneath the horses' feet; the Major riding stone dead in his saddle, a ghastly red stain in the centre of his forehead; then Hunter, of E, went down screaming, and I knew I was the senior captain left. About me scarce a hundred men battled like demons for their lives in the midst of the guns. Even as I glanced aside at them, shielding my head with uplifted sabre from the blows rained upon me, the color-sergeant flung up his hand, and grasped his saddle pommel to keep from falling. Out of his opening fingers I snatched the splintered staff, lifted it high up, until the rent folds of the old flag caught the dull glow of the sunlight.

"—th Virginia!" I shouted. "Rally on the colors!"

I could see them coming—all that was left of them—fighting their way through the press, cleaving the mass with their blows as the prow of a ship cut the sea. With one vicious jab of the spur I led them, a thin wedge of tempered gray steel, battering, gouging, rending a passage into that solid blue wall. Inch by inch, foot by foot, yard by yard, slashing madly with our broken sabres, battling as men crazed with lust of blood, our very horses fighting for us with teeth and hoofs, we ploughed a lane of death through a dozen files. Then the vast mass closed in upon us, rolled completely over us. There was a flash, a vision of frenzied faces, and I knew no more.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)



On Foot and Dying He Reached Our Front.

An Inspiration.

"Professor McHuddle is very ingenious in twisting things around to illustrate his theories, is he not?"

"Yes, I believe he proposes to take the fact of the champagne troubles in France nearly overturning the government, to illustrate the curse of drink."

W. N. U., Oklahoma City, No. 1, 1912.

METHOD OF KEEPING YOUNG

Remarkably Sound Advice for the Woman Who Has Some Years of Life to Her Credit.

The way to ward off old age is not to fear it, not to allow one's self to be oppressed by the dread of advancing years. Use only legitimate preventives and avoid trying experiments with preparations not indorsed by physicians. Do not wear toilettes intended for young girls, they only add years to the appearance. Keep up your interest in the young, but do not envy them. Retire with dignity from the struggle, do not pose as your daughter's rival. Above all, surround your life with sweet, true affections which prevent the heart from growing bitter. Do not lose interest in the growing events of the day; do not fall behind the times and do not harp on other and better days. To those who come to you for advice be always kind and sympathetic. As you advance in years preserve carefully your personal appearance, for once lost it may not be regained, save by strenuous effort. Your costumes should be simple and unpretentious, yet graceful. These rules, carefully and sensibly followed, will keep you young and attractive.—Exchange.

IN HASTE, TOO.

"I t'ought yous sed yous kin lick me wid yer hands tied behind yer back?"

"I—I—can! I'm j—just goin' now to get a string to tie 'em!"

Too Bad.

"I never see you at church, Mrs. Whipple."

"No. I'm afraid the services would be trying on Fido's nerves, and when I leave him at home the poor dear gets positively frantic.

Ah, Sherlock!

"I see where a poor fellow drowned. I wonder how that happened."

"Perhaps he sank."

It's never too late to—" lend.